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6 August 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Soviet Analysis

THROUGH: Chief, Strategic Issues Group, SOVA

FROM: [] SOVA/SIG/SP/V

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SUBJECT: Ogarkov's New Book: A Call for Change in Soviet Doctrine?

Summary

On 8 April 1985 a new book by Ogarkov, History Teaches Vigilance, was signed to press. [] suggested that it was mainly a rehash by the Marshal of old issues and themes and offered nothing new. Having now read the book itself, I disagree. The book may, in fact, represent the most significant public discussion of doctrinal issues Ogarkov has ever authored. His discussion takes on even more significance in light of recent rumors that he may be slated for reinstatement in the top echelons of the Ministry of Defense. The thrust of his argument, which he presents more strongly and in greater detail than in any previous discussion, is that a serious reevaluation of the roles of nuclear and conventional weapons is due--perhaps overdue. []

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The book thus provides additional evidence that Ogarkov has been involved in some internal "debate" over the defense priorities the Soviets should set for the next several years--and that his removal as General Staff chief in September 1984 did not signal an end to this debate. Although it is premature to say how the debate will come out, I believe it involves the affordability of maintaining various conventional options as the Soviets now seek above all to counter the new nuclear challenges from the West. Ogarkov seems to be saying that it would be shortsighted to slight these options--especially the role of advanced conventional weapons--and that he at least is prepared to take a hard look at the future combat roles of all sorts of conventional and nuclear weapons, perhaps including such sacred cows as the tank. In my judgment, Ogarkov's message does not add up to a call for a so-called shift to conventional combat at the expense of future nuclear force needs. On the

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basis of earlier Western interpretations of his outlook, however, I expect many Western readers of the new book will be tempted to jump to this conclusion. [REDACTED]

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Discussion

The Book

1. Ogarkov treats a wide range of topics in his new book, but the most significant discussions concern the general requirement for military thinking to stay abreast of the times (in itself a standard Ogarkov theme) and the particular importance of advanced conventional weapons. Some examples:

- He cites a lengthy Engels' statement to the effect that changing technology forces changes in weaponry and military concepts" ... often against the will of the military command." (p. 40)
- He ranks the development of advanced conventional weapons as one of the drivers of the contemporary revolution in military affairs (p. 41). The "revolution in military affairs" has been a standard formulation for years to basically treat the impact of nuclear weapons on Soviet military thinking and force development. Usually military theorists discuss it as having three stages: the development of nuclear weapons per se; the development of ballistic missiles; and the development of electronics, particularly affecting command and control. Ogarkov's formulation is a clear departure from this treatment. He ranks developments in conventional weapons technology with two others--nuclear weapons (perhaps this is now meant to encompass ballistic missiles as well) and electronics.
- In discussing how quantitative changes in combat means result in qualitative changes, he cites the example of the growth of nuclear weapons. In the late 1950s and 1960s when there were few nuclear weapons, he argues, they were mainly seen as a means to sharply increase the firepower of troops. In the 1970s and early 1980s, he notes, as a result of increases in both numbers and ranges of nuclear weapons and accuracy improvements "a fundamental review of the role of the nuclear weapon ... (occurred) ... The former views ... (i.e., consensus) ... broke down regarding its place and significance in war, the means of using it in battles and operations, and even the possibility of conducting a war with the use of the nuclear weapon as a whole." (p. 51)
- In discussing how the "dialectic of negation in military affairs" (basically, the process whereby existing weapons and concepts are made

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obsolete) continues to the present, he cites many areas where this dialectic should currently be kept in mind--affecting aircraft, tanks, and "even in significant measure ships." To ignore various "tendencies" ... (i.e., developments) ... that can make certain existing weapons obsolete, he contends, is "dangerous." He further admonishes that "...the law of negation of the negation immediately underscores this thought--that both in military theory and in the practice of military affairs one should not absolutize." (p. 55)

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What Does All of This Mean?

2. Having read all of Ogarkov's earlier available writings, both classified and unclassified, I am convinced that he is making some new arguments in this book. Having examined his previous open writings as a means to "disinform" the West about Soviet nuclear doctrine, I am also inclined to believe that the messages noted above are not mainly intended for this purpose. (Elsewhere in the book he trots out the familiar themes of "no superiority", "no first use", "no limited nuclear war" and the like which probably are intended mainly to influence Western audiences.) At the very least, therefore, he seems to be making a serious pitch for some rethinking about where the Soviets should be going with their conventional and nuclear forces over the next several years--and particularly arguing that advanced conventional weapons should be accorded an important role.

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Is Ogarkov Arguing For a "Shift" to Conventional Forces?

3. It will be tempting for many readers of the Ogarkov book to jump to the conclusion that he is arguing for a decreased role for nuclear weapons in the future and pinning his hopes on conventional combat. Some Western interpretations of his May 1984 "Victory Day" discussion, in which he also emphasized the importance of advanced conventional weapons, contend that this has been his basic outlook for some time and that he got canned for it in September when he lost his job as General Staff chief. For this school of thought on Ogarkov, the new book will easily provide grist for the mill. (Strangely, however, [redacted] did not pick up on the new messages in the book even though such reporting has tended to push the "conventional shift" line in recent years.) As I have discussed at length in my latest IA draft on Soviet nuclear doctrine, the thesis of a "conventional shift" has major flaws. Any arguments using Ogarkov's new book to buttress this thesis would have major flaws as well.

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-- On the grounds of strategic logic alone, a truly significant Soviet shift to conventional forces at the expense of future nuclear forces would be counterproductive. (By "shift," I mean relative to the

recent and current budget shares. In absolute terms, conventional forces in both the US and USSR have received, of course, the lion's share of defense outlays over the years.) Neither we nor the Soviets have the luxury of simply deciding to emphasize conventional combat in the nuclear age. However dismal the prospect of nuclear combat might be, we cannot just focus on conventional combat as an alternative and seek to replay World War II with fancier weapons. Unless one's nuclear forces are adequate to provide confidence that a major conventional war will not escalate, neither side can bank on fighting such a war (certainly not in Europe where Ogarkov's attention is directed). Therefore, although it is a popular notion that conventional weapons are usable while nuclear weapons are not, we must be careful to avoid overdrawing this distinction in making judgments on the types of forces we or the Soviets should "rationally" seek to emphasize. As far as major war in Europe is concerned, the Soviets can only count on conventional weapons being usable, if their nuclear weapons are in a sense usable as well by being sufficient to keep NATO from going nuclear.

- The Soviets--and Ogarkov personally--have fully appreciated this strategic logic. Classified discussions, exercises and Soviet force developments (as I have discussed in my IA draft) amply document the Soviets' appreciation since the mid-1960s of the need for a balanced approach to nuclear and conventional combat.
- A shift to conventional forces would be especially bizarre (or strategically inept) for the Soviets to undertake now in the wake of various Western nuclear challenges they must confront. Is it likely that the Soviets believe their capacity to intimidate NATO with their nuclear prowess will somehow be greater than it has been in the past, if they make only half-hearted efforts to counter such programs as INF, D-5, and SDI? We have firm evidence that even before the Soviets had to seriously confront these new Western developments they were still not confident they could keep a conventional war from escalating, despite the many conventional and nuclear force improvements they had already made. What, therefore, would give them such confidence now? If we cannot come up with a good answer to this crucial question, then we have to conclude that either:

- ° Ogarkov is not such a smart strategic thinker;
- ° He is prepared to take considerable risks to make a new Soviet conventional buildup pay off; or

- ° He is, in fact, not prepared to stint on future nuclear forces but rather continues to appreciate that maintaining an intimidating nuclear posture is a sine qua non for facilitating combat with both standard and advanced conventional weapons--as well as being the best means to deal with the grim consequences. should such combat still result in nuclear war.

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4. In short, I believe (as I argue in the IA) it is more likely that Ogarkov has been defending a continuation of the high priority the Soviets have placed on conventional weapons in recent years (which has included, incidentally, at least a considerable recognition already of the growing importance of advanced weapons)--rather than arguing for a basically new or significantly greater commitment. To the extent there is a "debate" over the future direction of Soviet military efforts among the political and military leaders, I think that at bottom it is over the affordability of maintaining various preparations for conventional combat as the Soviets try above all now to counter the new nuclear challenges from the West. (In the IA, I track the evolution of Ogarkov's public statements in the 1980s in the context of what we believe are the standard milestones in the Soviets' preparation of the next five year plan. It is suggestive that Ogarkov began to ride the "conventional combat" hobby-horse more than ever after the US SDI announcement in March 1983--an announcement which may have upset earlier plan calculations. For example, his first detailed treatment of NATO's advanced conventional weapons was in the following September, which presaged the remarks on such weapons in his May 1984 discussion on which most Western analysts have focused.)

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5. Ogarkov's new book lends credence to the notion that there is an ongoing--and perhaps serious--debate. It at least has something to do with the emphasis that should be placed on advanced conventional weapons. (This is suggested not only by Ogarkov's efforts to push this theme, but also by the public statements of others, such as Marshal Petrov, who have seemed to argue against overemphasizing such weapons. Circumstantial evidence indicates Ogarkov's earlier efforts may even have contributed to his ouster as General Staff chief. In the only article he published since his removal--in November 1984, when Chernenko was still in power--he curiously omitted any mention of advanced conventional weapons while repeating other themes from his May 1984 discussion.) The debate may even involve such sacred cows as the role of the tank. And Ogarkov certainly seems to be saying that a whole variety of doctrinal propositions should be subject to fresh scrutiny.

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Analytical Requirements

6. Since the Soviets are now confronted with a broad array of new military challenges--from SDI to NATO's advanced conventional weapons--amid continued resource constraints, it is not at all surprising that there would

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be pressures on them to try to figure out how the Soviet military can efficiently maintain a variety of nuclear and conventional options over the next several years. When Ogarkov argues therefore that, in effect, one should not "absolutize" the nuclear weapon (or the tenets of recent doctrine as a whole), I believe what he is saying is that it is essential to try to preserve (or strengthen) all the various options the Soviet military has worked hard to achieve over the years. An overemphasis now on meeting the new nuclear challenges from the West and slighting advanced conventional weapons--because of resource constraints and the expectation that INF and other measures will further reduce the USSR's chances for controlling escalation and thus fighting a conventional war--would, in his view, be shortsighted. [REDACTED]

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7. It is premature for us to say how the Soviets will sort out these matters or, indeed, whether Ogarkov's basic pitch will be heeded. (In my current redraft of the Doctrine IA, I am trying to provide some pointers on how the Soviets might evaluate "nuclear superiority," "preemption," and other doctrinal goals for the future.) The essential point, however, is that we will have the greatest chance of being on the mark if we try to approach these issues as the Soviet General Staff would try to do. Namely, we should not evaluate the significance of advanced conventional weapons, INF, SDI, D-5, increased mobility for Soviet ICBMs and the like, each in isolation--but rather in combination as affecting the USSR's overall prospects and priorities for both conventional and nuclear war. [REDACTED]

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8. Unless it badly falls down on the job, the General Staff will approach the problem this way to permit comprehensive, coherent and (probably now more than ever) efficient force planning. To reasonably approximate where the General Staff will come out, our approach must be similar--and not yield to the temptation to make quick generalizations based on narrowly focused analyses or the evidentiary tid-bits that Soviet open military writings (such as Ogarkov's recent book) may offer up. [REDACTED]

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